

Ginger Mancino, Kid Comedian

Wendi Aarons

BookBar Press (Jun 21, 2022)

Softcover \$11.99 (234pp)

978-1-73398-874-2

In Wendi Aaron's delightful novel *Ginger Mancino, Kid Comedian*, a girl navigates the spaces between fame and friendship.

Ginger may be on a first-name basis with Jimmy Kimmel, but her career as a stand-up comedian comes to a screeching halt when she reaches adolescence and her agent decides that she's too awkward to be funny. Having been homeschooled until now, she doesn't have any friends her own age.

Ginger's well-meaning parents enroll her in a public school in Austin, Texas, where no one cares about her former celebrity status or seems to appreciate her sense of humor. Then she meets Daisy, an aspiring artist who wears a cape and laughs at her jokes, and a cute boy, Chance, who wants to be a film director. The three of them set about rehabilitating Ginger's reputation via social media—that is, until Daisy's father decides that Ginger is a bad influence on his daughter, who should be devoting herself to homework, not unprofitable art.

The agony and embarrassment of middle school, including bullying, fish sandwiches, and fart jokes, is tempered by tantalizing behind-the-scenes glimpses of show business. Amid Ginger's loneliness and alienation, she receives inspirational quotes from her favorite adult comedians. But who is sending them? Meanwhile, Ginger learns that genuine connections are far more important than clicks, likes, and going viral. Ginger, Daisy, and Chance's efforts to make their dreams come true are inspiring and empowering.

As a narrator, Ginger delivers snappy one-liners on every page. Even though her classmates may not always be laughing, her story is full of humor and heart. *Ginger Mancino, Kid Comedian* is a warm, funny novel about the value of pursuing your dreams.

SUZANNE KAMATA (July / August 2022)

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